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Recognizing Restraints

Henry Steel Commager, historian who teaches at Amherst College, laid it on the line yesterday in testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate regarding policies now being followed by this country.

He told the Senate group, and the country as a whole would be well advised to listen:

The United States has a moralistic obsession with communism and has overextended itself as a world power.

The United States does not have the material, intellectual or moral resources to be at once an American, European and Asian power.

Nor is it our duty to keep peace throughout the world, to put down aggression wherever it starts up, to stop the advance of communism or other "isms" which we may not appreciate.

Unless we realize there are restraints and limitations on the application of immense power, the American tradition of limits on the power of government is in danger.

Thus Dr. Commager before the congressional committee.

All of what he said is important, but none of it more so than his reference to the American tradition of limits on the power of government. If the United States is going to take on world opponents because of disagreements over their form of government, it is going to have to impose its power more and more on its own people.

This phase of immensity is making itself felt here at home more all the time. The recent disclosure concerning the secret organization, the CIA, is a manifestation.

Dr. Commager pointed out that we are said to be fighting communism to preserve American individual rights and freedoms, but the fight has grown to such proportions that individual rights and freedoms are put in danger here in the United States.

It must be recognized that there are restraints and limitations on the application of immense power—otherwise, as the witness said, the very philosophy of government in this country may face changes which will affect every American.

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